

this country by young people in their teens and their twenties and in their thirties who thought they were invincible but who got knocked off their feet by a devastating disease such as cancer and who desperately need health care insurance at the time of that illness in order to get back onto their feet.

Some of the best news that has come out over the past several months, as the enrollment has started to ramp up on the Affordable Care Act, has been the number of young people who have signed up. We have seen that 31 percent of all of the people who have signed up for insurance exchanges all across this country are 34 years or under. This is a real signal that young people are recognizing that, although they may feel as if they are going to live forever, they desperately need insurance, just as everyone else does. So that is why I was so glad to see President Obama yesterday go on the show "Between Two Ferns," with Zach Galifianakis, to talk about the importance of young people signing up.

We all know about the "Two Ferns" effect. Previously unknown stars such as Will Ferrell and Bradley Cooper went on "Two Ferns" and were catapulted to stardom. I am glad to see the "Two Ferns" effect has had the same impact on health care enrollment. Since President Obama went on "Two Ferns," 19,000 people were referred to the Web site of enrollment from the "Funny or Die" Web site. By 6 p.m. that day the video had sent 32,000 people to healthcare.gov. HHS officials said traffic on healthcare.gov had risen by 40 percent on Tuesday to over 890,000 visits in 1 day.

It is a signal that when young people, through whatever means is available to them, find out about the benefits of the Affordable Care Act, they are interested and they are signing up. I hope President Obama uses more innovative tools and methods to try to get the word out to young adults in their late teens, twenties, and thirties about the importance of signing up for the Affordable Care Act because it is important. Some 70,000 adolescents and young adults are diagnosed with cancer every single year in this country. There are 151,000 people below the age of 20 living with diabetes right now. So despite the fact that we may think we are going to live forever or think we may not need coverage, young people need it as well. It is affordable.

The President said yesterday on this show: You effectively can get coverage for the cost of a cell phone bill. And it is true. Having a cell phone is pretty important, but being able to get treatment when you get a serious disease is pretty important as well.

In Connecticut the numbers are pretty reasonable. A 22-year-old in Hartford making a \$25,000 salary—which is the salary I made in my first job in Hartford—can get a bronze policy for as low as \$66 a month through Anthem. A 25-year-old living in Bridgeport making a little more, \$30,000, can get a

bronze policy for as low as \$108 a month. About two-thirds of all young adults across the country who are currently uninsured are eligible for these subsidies.

For all of these young people who were previously going to the marketplace and often having to pay full price, often buying insurance on their own with no ability to negotiate a group discount, this health care law is transformational. Fifty or sixty dollars a month is the price for bronze plans. And this doesn't even count the catastrophic option open to most young people as well.

The good news continues to roll in when it comes to the numbers of people signing up. Yesterday the administration announced that 4.2 million people have enrolled in marketplaces through March 1; 943,000 people enrolled in the short month of February; and 31 percent of all those people are 34 or younger. And, of course, we haven't even gotten to crunch time yet.

I wish this weren't the case, but I know something about how young people think. Too many leave big decisions until the last minute, whether it be studying for a test, writing a term paper, or signing up for health care.

As we have seen in the past on a lot of these enrollment deadlines, like the enrollment deadline for Medicare Part D, the surge comes in the final few weeks of enrollment. So we expect to see the numbers pick up in a significant way through March.

Knowing how people in their twenties and thirties think, I expect we will see a major surge in enrollment from young people as well. But they shouldn't wait until the last minute. It does take more than a few hours to look at the choices and decide which is best. In Connecticut we have three insurance plans offering coverage, but each one of them has three or four different plans. So I hope young adults in their twenties and thirties take more than a few hours or a day to sign up because we want to make sure they get the plan available for them. It is easy to do with a phone call to an enrollment center, a visit in Connecticut to the in-person centers in New Britain and New Haven, and very simple to do on healthcare.gov.

In Connecticut our exchange is going like gangbusters. We had a goal of signing up 80,000 to 100,000 people, and a full 30 days before the deadline we have signed up 152,000 people. Of those individuals in Connecticut, about 25 percent are 25 years or younger. We are on track to double our original estimates in Connecticut.

Connecticut is a State that had a pretty high rate of insured to begin with, so our delta to get to full insurance was relatively small compared to other States. But guess what Connecticut is doing. Connecticut is actually working to implement the law rather than working to undermine the law. We put a lot of time and thought into getting a working Web site, into

doing the kind of outreach other States are not doing to get people to sign up. When we have done that, young people and old people across the board have flocked to sign up.

I was glad to see the President do his outreach yesterday to young people all across the country. I was glad to see the spike in interest on healthcare.gov. I am glad to see that 4.2 million people have signed up for health care, as more people all across the country—young people especially—are realizing the Affordable Care Act works.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, too often in Washington our friends on the left seem to operate under a very dangerous assumption: that good intentions are more important than a good outcome. I say it is dangerous because we see all the time how liberal Washington politics that aim to alleviate problems such as poverty or wage stagnation or other social or economic problems just seem to make things worse. Yet, despite the evidence, the policies never seem to change. More money just gets thrown at the same failed programs year after year with barely any thought as to whether they actually work.

ObamaCare is a case in point. Here is a big-government bill that Washington Democrats thought they could just pass and—poof—health care would magically be made more affordable for everybody. Yet for millions of Americans just the opposite happened. Contrary to the assurances, ObamaCare has upended lives and businesses all across our country. It has forced painful choices for people who could barely get by as it was. It is a mess.

So one would assume Washington Democrats would step back and take a long hard look at the accumulating evidence and start thinking about ways to keep this thing from pummeling even more Americans. But we would be wrong. They just keep doubling down.

When the Web site crashed, they called it a glitch. When people started losing their doctors and their plans, they told them: You can live with it. When Americans started sharing their ObamaCare horror stories, they basically called them all liars. That would tell us something we need to know about how much Washington liberals care about middle-class Americans. They are captive to the most extreme ideologies of the left, and they don't even try to hide it anymore. Forget reason or economics or sound argument; it is all about ideology with these guys.

We saw it all on vivid display a couple nights ago with the Democrats' all-

night talkathon on global warming. The reason for the all-nighter was pretty obvious: It was a command performance for a leftwing activist donor out in California. And the fact that taxpayers were basically subsidizing the whole thing was bad enough, but what about the basic substance of the issue Democrats were talking about the other night. What about that. It is just one more case where good intentions trump the impact their proposals would have on ordinary Americans.

See, the Obama administration seems to think that if it just wishes really hard and issues enough regulations, it can singlehandedly reduce global carbon emissions—without bringing Beijing and New Delhi onboard. It is an alternate universe where “victory” means U.S. emissions going down by some negligible amount—and where China and India don’t simultaneously eclipse that tiny emissions reduction with expanded energy of their own. It is a universe where the massive economic consequence of acting so recklessly doesn’t seem to matter, and it is a universe where middle-class Americans somehow don’t take the hit to our economic output right on the chin. In other words, it is the kind of thing that could only make sense to a party blinded by extremist ideology.

Of course, Washington Democrats love to pull out that old straw man and say: Either you support our approach completely—even if it won’t actually solve the problem it purports to—or you hate the environment. It is kind of like when they said: Either you vote for ObamaCare or you hate affordable health care. Well, our constituents remember how that worked out, and our constituents are quite capable of seeing the complexity in the world which so often eludes our friends on the left. They are capable of caring deeply about the environment, for instance, while disagreeing with the administration’s ideological crusade.

Of course, every ideological crusade needs an enemy. In the administration’s war on coal, Washington Democrats appear to have found their foil. It is not some fat cat. It is not some Wall Street titan. No. This time it seems to be middle-class Kentucky families—miners who struggle every day just to put food on the table, the kinds of Americans who work hard so the rest of us can have a better life. Well, it is unfair and it is wrong.

Where Washington Democrats seem to see faceless adversaries, I see human beings, people who are hurting. I wish my Democratic colleagues would join me sometime as I travel around Kentucky listening to their concerns.

At one recent hearing, a miner named Howard Abshire had this message for President Obama:

Come and look at our little children, look at our people, Mr. President. You’re not hurting for a job; you’ve got one. I don’t have one.

Another miner, Gary Lockhart, said his biggest worry was just trying to

keep a roof over his family’s head and food on the table. When it comes to his fellow miners, here is what he had to say:

Many of these men, who have never asked the government for any kind of assistance in their lives . . . [are] having to go home and tell their families that their pay’s going to be cut to practically nothing, [that] there’ll be very little Christmas this year, no vacations, nothing extra.

Miners aren’t the only ones affected by all the pain out there in coal country. I will read a letter I received from Bill Scaggs, a businessman and pastor from Pikeville. Here is what Bill had to say:

We have had to lay off employees due to the closings of mines and the [effect] they have had. Our business is losing thousands of dollars due to the negative impact of the EPA. As a pastor . . . our benevolence to the community has increased fivefold with help for food, power bills, clothing, and just the day to day living expenses that families need.

Americans may not always know it, but they owe a lot to coal miners like the ones I represent in Kentucky. Whether it is watching a TV show, drying a pair of jeans, or saving some leftover takeout for tomorrow, we often probably have a miner to thank for the electricity that makes it all possible. That is also true if we try to keep the lights on all night long.

So I hope our friends on the other side will remember to be thankful for the electricity that makes all-night talkathons actually possible. Honestly, I still don’t get the point of the stunt. They didn’t introduce legislation or schedule votes on the national electricity tax they seem to want so badly. Remember, they control the Senate, so they can bring it up for debate whenever they want to. Where is the climate change debate? Where is the bill? People who were speaking all night control the Senate. Bring up the bill. Here is the point: Republicans care deeply about the environment. We also care deeply about creating jobs and growing the middle class, and we do not think our country should have to sacrifice one priority for the other. The American people do not either. So it is time for Washington Democrats to drop the billionaire-approved ideological crusades, to quit all the talk and get onboard with sensible forward-looking action to create jobs. We have tried the left’s wish-upon-a-star approach already and real people have been hurt. So why not try some things that will actually work.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Will the Senator withhold his request?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I will withhold.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the new numbers that have been released on the President’s health

care plan. Yesterday the administration announced that slightly more than 4.2 million people have signed up for health plans through the exchanges. As we all know, that is substantially below their first goal and substantially below their adjusted goal just a few weeks ago.

One of the things, in an effort by the Washington Post to find out how many of those people hadn’t had insurance before—the group that was supposed to be served well by this—their estimate was in an article also this week, about 1 million people—an incredible amount of effort to add 1 million people to the insurance rolls, particularly with the stories from the millions of people who were on the insurance rolls that come to our offices every day; stories that clearly reflect problems with this law and problems, more importantly, for the American families who are impacted.

I brought a few of them with me today—since I was talking about this topic last week—that have come to our office. These are stories where we reached back, contacted these people, said I was going to come to the floor with their story. I mentioned their first name and where they are from, are they concerned with that. Time after time people say, oh, no, we want this story told, which is why we reached out to you.

Gary in Lake Ozark, MO, says what so many people are saying—that his deductible is now the problem. In fact, his deductible on the policy he can now have—let me just read what he said:

Before I knew I’d be able to stay on my company’s plan—

He was going to be able to stay on his company plan 1 year longer than he thought he was just a few months ago—

Before I knew I’d be able to stay on my company’s plan, I went to the exchange to seek coverage. I found a plan available to me but was shocked to learn that my deductible was going to be over \$8,000 per family member.

This is quickly becoming the new group of people who aren’t able to meet their health care costs. I met with a number of health care administrators, hospital administrators from Missouri recently. They said their fastest growing category of unpaid bills, of unpaid debt, is from people who have insurance. So many people with insurance now have a deductible that is a deductible they believe they cannot pay, and because they believe they cannot pay it, they simply do not pay it. So whether it is the \$8,000 on Gary’s policy or the other lower amounts—hopefully, I will find some lower amounts here.

Here is one from another Gary. This Gary is in southeast Missouri. His wife’s deductible went from \$500 to \$1,800—story after story. What happens when you have that growing deductible, whether it is the \$1,800 or the \$3,000 or the \$8,000, if it was \$500 and that was all you were going to have to pay, you might figure out how to put together \$500 or maybe even more than that, but when you see \$1,800 or \$3,000